



## RALPH NADER RADIO HOUR EP 329 TRANSCRIPT

**Steve Skrovan:** It's the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*.

♪ Stand up, stand up. You've been sitting way too long ♪

**Steve Skrovan:** Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. My name is Steve Skrovan, along with my co-host, David Feldman. Hello, David.

**David Feldman:** Hello, there.

**Steve Skrovan:** Nice to have you, and it's also nice to have the man of the hour, Ralph Nader. Hello, Ralph.

**Ralph Nader:** Hello, everybody.

**Steve Skrovan:** So much of the story we tell ourselves about America focuses on our military history. We venerate the flag and the national anthem [The Star-Spangled Banner], which itself is the description of a military victory in the war of 1812. And when the national anthem is played at major sporting events, Air Force jets scream across the sky. It makes for great theater and sends the message that violent conquest and defense is what has made America great. On the other hand, there is a rule that a researcher at Harvard came up with called the 3 ½% rule. This rule says that it takes 3 ½% of the population actively participating in protests to create serious political change. This research also concluded that nonviolent protests are twice as likely to be successful as violent protests. Polls show that a majority of Americans support the recent protests against police violence. So, will these protests be able to bring about long-lasting change?

Our first guest today will be Michael G. Long. He studies the history of nonviolent protests in the United States, and we'll hear from him about what history shows us about creating a successful and peaceful revolution. In the second half of the show, we welcome Middle East expert Juan Cole while Black Lives Matter protests go on even in Israel, Israeli Arabs conduct their own demonstrations over the Israeli government's plans to pave over a 200-year-old cemetery in the Muslim suburb of Jaffa, just a short stroll down the boardwalk from Tel Aviv. Prime Minister Netanyahu's son, Yair, apparently the Donald Trump Jr. of Israel, speaks openly of ejecting Palestinian Israelis completely from Tel Aviv. He does that from the Prime Minister's residence with language that can only be described as "ethnic cleansing", all this while the Prime Minister himself puts forth a plan to annex up to 30% of the occupied West Bank starting July 1st. President Trump supports this plan, not surprisingly, and while we here in America are preoccupied with a growing pandemic in our own racial history,

Professor Cole is here to shine a light on these horrific plans going on with our most powerful ally in the Middle East.

In between, we'll take a short break and check in with our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber, and if we have some time left over, we'll try to answer some listener questions. But first, let's hear about the history of nonviolent resistance. David?

**David Feldman:** Michael G. Long is the author of several books on civil rights, politics, and religion. Dr. Long's book on Jackie Robinson was selected as a "Best Book of the Year" by *Publishers Weekly*, and his works have been featured or reviewed in *The Boston Globe*, the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *BookForum [Magazine]*, *Ebony* and *Jet [Magazines]*. He served as an expert historian for Ken Burns' documentary [miniseries] on Jackie Robinson, and his most recent book is *We the Resistance: Documenting a History of Nonviolent Protests in the United States*. Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Michael G. Long.

**Michael G. Long:** Hey, David. It's great to be with you. Thanks for the invitation.

**Ralph Nader:** Welcome indeed, Michael. Before we get into how you define nonviolent civil disobedience or resistance, I just want our listeners to know the scope of this marvelous 600-page paperback, which is of course very current now because of all the demonstrations and peaceful resistance that's going on in the country with Black Lives Matter and other less-publicized opposition, and picketing, and demonstrating on many, many issues. That's the American way. And this book starts in the 1600s. It's actually first-person accounts, largely. This is raw history. This isn't summary by historians, and it covers some remarkable nuances that we never read about or learn about in our American history courses. It starts out with the early roots of resistance when the Quakers, in 1657, wanted to speak publicly about their convictions and were suppressed from time to time by the Dutch Reformed Church in the New York City area. And then there is a section in there called "Buy Slaves to Free Them", one by an anonymous slave, "I am but a poor slave," 1723; one by Jonathan Mayhew, 1750, titled "The People are the Proper Judge". The one I saw quite interesting, "Tea Overboard", that's the tea party by George Hewes, and it was a description I never heard of. We just hear that they boarded at night, dressed in Native American garb with tomahawks, and they dumped chests of tea into the waters of Boston. But, actually it was pretty spontaneous. They got together the night before, very silent, quiet, dark night. They went on three ships at a time and they made sure that everything was synchronized, nobody was going to put some tea in their satchels before it went overboard, and the captains of the ship, the British captains of these three ships, which were surrounded by British armed vessels, they said, "Look, you can take the tea. Here's where it is, but don't

damage any part of the ship," and they took the tea and broke them open with their tomahawks so that it would be exposed to water, and then put them overboard. But then, that wasn't the end of it. And leave it to the readers to absorb this intriguing story of American history, 1773. And then, you know, it starts going into the 19th century, the whole effort of populism, and of course, in the 20th century, the bulk of the book is more in the 20th century, "Don't Ride the Bus," 1955 by Jo Ann Gibson Robinson, and then there's one called "We're Going to Keep Coming," 1961, by Jim Zwerg, and a living petition by Bayard Rustin, one by Fannie Lou Hamer, "I Didn't Try to Register For You", 1964. There's one, "Women Strike for Peace-the Cuban Missile Crisis". Then there's one on the "Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority", by Marcus Raskin and Arthur Waskow, 1967. Daniel Berrigan and the Catonsville Nine titled "Our Apologies, Good Friends", 1968. These are the anti-war resisters. And then it goes on into LGBT rights, women's rights, disability rights, anti-nuke movement, one by the Clamshell Alliance up in New Hampshire, "Declaration of Nuclear Resistance", and there's one on the Reagan years, "Union Busting", with some very good first-person statements, including the Pledge of Resistance, 1983 campaign, and one called "On the Gulf War in the Middle East, One Billion Dollars a Day", 1991, the cost, quite apart from the lives lost by June Jordan. And then the so-called "War on Terror", Medea Benjamin, "Isn't This Really About Oil?", and one is Cindy Sheehan, "Bring Our Troops Home". We all remember Cindy; she parked near George W. Bush's home in Texas so every time he went there, he had to go by her placards and her opposition, having lost her son in Iraq. It keeps on going. It's really very intriguing. "The Trump Era Begins: Not a Legitimate President" by John Lewis and Others all the way to 2018 with Tarana Burke, "MeToo" is About Restoring Humanity.

Well, I hope I've whetted your interest for this book, and now we get to interview the editor, Michael G. Long. First question, Michael. How do you define nonviolent action? How do you define nonviolent civil disobedience or civil resistance?

**Michael G. Long:** That's a great question, Ralph, especially since I don't define it in the book. [laughs]

**Ralph Nader:** But, you have Mr. Sharp define it.

**Michael G. Long:** I do, yeah. Gene Sharp is a -- or was; he's now deceased, a long-time theorist of nonviolent social change, and I really like his definition. For sure, nonviolent protest was a technique of action. It was a method. It wasn't a way of life. It wasn't like pacifism. It wasn't a belief based on, perhaps, religious or philosophical principles. But, for Sharp, it was a technique. It was a method that refused to use force, especially physical force, in Gene Sharp's definition. Other theorists, and I agree with this, also say that force can be psychological and emotional, and have other dimensions as well. But, for Sharp, it was mostly physical force. So, for me, I really like a definition of nonviolent protest to be one that says, "Nonviolent protest is a technique of action that refuses to

use physical and emotional force, but that uses all types of other force in order to accomplish social change."

**Ralph Nader:** Well, you know, Mr. Sharp, who is a legend in this area, he has thought a great deal about this; just to finish his definition, which you quote in your book, he defines nonviolent action as, "a technique of action for applying power in a conflict by using symbolic protests, non-cooperation, and defiance, but not physical violence." Now, I have a quibble with your book because our efforts, over the years, which have never involved physical violence, are not mentioned in your book at all. Because we work through litigation; we work through lobbying the Congress; we work through exposés, and we work through, once in a while, protests. I started the auto safety movement by having three people with me picket the New York Auto Coliseum Show in the early 1960s. So, just curious, the whole citizen movement that we have been such a part of just was excised out of this book. Why?

**Michael G. Long:** Well, I would have included the latter protest, had I been smart about it. But, I will say that I followed Sharp's definition in excluding traditional political practices like lobbying, like using the courts, and focused mostly on those means of nonviolent protest that occur in the streets, and out of the courts, and out of the traditional political processes. So, that's why a lot of those actions that you mentioned were excised from the book. Well, they weren't excised; they just weren't part of my target when I was putting the book together.

**Ralph Nader:** Don't you think this is a serious historical limitation? Because, what you're really saying is that these are protests that reject physical violence, but they are physical in the sense that you have to get out in the streets. You have to march; you have to picket; you have to protest physically instead of conceptually, intellectually, advocacy. See, I think what this does to a young reader is to basically keep people who are shy, people who don't like to go out and protest, and shout in unison calls for justice, out of the equation. If you had to do it over again (interrupted)

**Michael G. Long:** I don't think so.

**Ralph Nader:** If you had to do it over again, would you include?

**Michael G. Long:** No, I wouldn't include what you're asking for at this point. There are tons of books on legal actions people have taken in order to effect social change. There are books about Ralph Nader. There are books about Ralph Nader's work. There are books about electoral politics, about lobbying, and the list is long. Many, many trees have been killed creating these books. Books about nonviolent protest, especially a book like this with an area of focus, are very few and far between. As far as I know, this is the only book documenting a history of nonviolent protest in the United States in the way that I've done it, available on the bookshelf. Books about the topics that you've

mentioned are everywhere, so, while I appreciate the contrarian point, I disagree with it quite a bit.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, I mean fair enough. You've defined what you want to do. I'm really surprised it's the only book of its kind. There are books out on nonviolent resistance to wars, aren't there? I remember seeing one that came out about 10 years ago very much in the same style as your book.

**Michael G. Long:** Yeah, I think the one that comes closest is a compendium that was compiled by Staughton Lynd, and it focuses on nonviolence in the United States, so it's not quite as comprehensive as my -- it's an excellent book, published by Orbis Books in New York. It's an excellent book, and if anybody can put a book together like that it's Staughton Lynd. And that comes close, but it's not quite as comprehensive. There are a lot of books focused on nonviolence, but around particular topics and around particular events. This is the one that really goes from the 1600s to contemporary United States, as far as I know; I don't know of any other. Now, there's a lot of important work, and I believe it was James or David who mentioned it early in the program, that is being done by Erica Chenoweth, Harvard scholar whose works were cited at the top of the program. She's doing a lot of work on civil resistance, and that's very important work.

**Ralph Nader:** Why, by the way, should elementary school, middle school students, and high school students read this book?

**Michael G. Long:** They should read it because of the way that U.S. history is often put together in our elementary, and middle school, and high schools; and that is a way that highlights war and conquest. When I studied history, in my growing years, what I studied, really, was a series of wars. We went from the Revolutionary War to every war that followed it, and we noticed that we won most of them. The Vietnam War was a sad part in my history classes because we didn't really win that war. But, we studied war; we studied generals; we studied presidents who became very important because of wars. And so, what this book does is study the underside, the underbelly of human history, and it makes the case, though it doesn't do it explicitly that you can study history by studying nonviolent movements. It also makes the case that this nation was born in the crucible of nonviolent protests as well. And that's a lesson that I never learned in public school. It's a lesson that I believe that every student should know about in public school.

**Ralph Nader:** True, the lesson is revolution, violent revolution, the American Revolution. That's all we learned about. We never learned about the peaceful protests in 1774 in Western and Central Massachusetts long before Lexington and Concord, and Paul Revere--long in the sense of months before--where they surrounded the Tory representatives in town after town and boycotted the Tory courts. And this was all done

very quietly and silently, and that was not part of our history books. It required a historian to write a book called *The First American Revolution* [by Ralph Raphael] on that critical period in 1774 before it started erupting in 1775.

I owe you an apology because I just turned to page 433 where you have a statement by Jesse Jackson, "NAFTA is Economic Hemorrhage", 1993. It's part of the chapter, "Anti-Globalization Movement", and you say, "In 1993, Jackson joined Ralph Nader in appearing before the U.S. House Committee and publicly criticizing President Bill Clinton for supporting the North America Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA. Before and after offering his testimony, Jackson appeared at anti-NAFTA demonstrations across the country," as, indeed, I appeared in some of these anti-NAFTA demonstrations in Washington. So, there is a connection here, like supporting economic boycotts doesn't necessarily require a physical demonstration. It could just require a major press conference, for example.

**Michael G. Long:** I want to go back to your earlier point about why nonviolent protest seems to be missing in historical studies. I think part of it is just because nonviolent protests aren't as, I hate to use the word, but aren't as sexy as violent protests. I mean, if you look at the contemporary media coverage of the George Floyd protests, we saw most of the coverage when the George Floyd protests turned violent. And that's what we do; we're attracted to violence. We love to watch violent protests more than nonviolent protests. Nonviolent protests aren't as sexy for the media, nor have they been as attractive to historians through the years as violent protests. There's something about blood and gore that always sells, right? It leads, right? If it bleeds, it leads. That's been true of history books for a very long time, and it continues to be true of contemporary media.

**Ralph Nader:** Of course. Hollywood, for example, all the comic books. That's the theme. It's something about the human condition that alerts itself more to those kinds of stories than to pacifist Quaker efforts or Unitarian efforts.

**Michael G. Long:** And are there video games about peaceful protests? [laughter]

**Ralph Nader:** Yes, yes.

**Michael G. Long:** I doubt it. I don't know. And my sons play video games. I don't know of them playing any games about peaceful protests in American history. [laughter]

**Ralph Nader:** It reflects a certain attention span of human beings. You have something in the latter part of the book, and this is another dimension of nonviolent protest, often led by women who go to the nuclear submarine base in Groton, Connecticut or who go to the base that launches drone attacks, Creech Air Force Base in Clark County, Nevada. That's pretty remote, but there was a silent vigil demonstration; you have a picture on

page 467. This is where, you know, you push a button in Nevada and a vehicle full of people in Yemen or Iraq or wherever are blown up. And their claim and their plea, by the way, their plea against the U.S. drone program that is rapidly proliferating at air bases in the U.S. and abroad, they say, "We must put an end to the dehumanization of lives from Ferguson, to Palestine, to Syria, and Yemen. We must close all foreign U.S. military bases, money for human needs. We must put an end to drone murder, drone surveillance, and global militarization."

Now, we see one of the prices of spending over 50% of our federal government's entire operating budget on military and empire abroad, is that we didn't invest in pandemic alerts, research, organization, healthcare supplies, healthcare facilities. And we were almost completely defenseless when the virus struck in January of this year followed by over eight weeks of belittling, falsification, and delay by Donald J. Trump. So, that's one reason why, listeners, you should read this book. It gives you the frame of reference.

**Michael G. Long:** Ralph, I'm gonna -- I'm sorry, Ralph, if I may jump in, I want to make a comment about the Creech Air Force Base protest. One of the most troubling things about that base and others like it that use drone warfare is that the killing is done so remotely. Those who kill have very little personal interaction with those who are affected, if any. And what I really like about the protest there is that they're intensely personal. So, in the photo that you referred to, there is a line of officers, of military officers just standing there, and in front of them there are some little girls who are protesting peacefully. It's that personal interaction, I think, sometimes, that nonviolent theorists and nonviolent actionists rely on in order to change people's hearts and thoughts. That personal interaction is just missing in the lives of those who kill by drone warfare. You know, Dr. King, I believe, decided that he would speak out against the Vietnam War when he sat down with a magazine and looked at really powerful images of young children suffering in the Vietnam War. Images, images matter so much. I think we've seen that as well in the recent George Floyd protests. That image of the officer kneeling on Floyd's neck really sparked a movement in ways that we haven't seen before. You know, I'm thinking as well, of the image of Emmett Till; Emmett Till's bloated face, pulled out of; his whole body pulled out of the Tallahatchie River after he was lynched in 1955. That image of Emmett Till's face really sparked a Black civil rights movement in 1955 to 1968. Images, as you know, matter a lot in terms of nonviolent protests.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, you provoke an interesting reaction from me, which is it often takes some kind of brutal visual, like the video of George Floyd being suffocated and killed by this policeman with his knee. Do you ever ask yourself why it takes something that endpoint brutal to rouse millions of people when there have been all kinds of documentaries, news reports about police brutality, out of control constantly, and actual



mayhem against innocent civilians? Why does it take that endpoint type trigger to launch this marvelous widespread [and] growing, continuing protest?

**Michael G. Long:** I wish I knew the answer to the question, and I don't. But I do know that, in this most recent case, the fury is directly related to the way that image traveled across social media. And in the Emmett Till case, that fury was directly related to *Jet's* publication of Emmett Till's image. So, it has to get in a lot of hands, right? And one of the successful ingredients of a nonviolent protest movement is that the population be large and diverse, population of protesters, that is. And one of the most interesting things about these George Floyd protests is that they're broadest in U.S. history. We see a large and diverse population in these protests that we simply haven't seen in other protests. I'll tell you, I'm from Lewistown, Pennsylvania. It's a small Rust Belt town where the steel industry collapsed, where the textile industry collapsed, and it's deeply embedded in conservative thought. And there are towns like Lewistown in Pennsylvania, where I still live - I live in Harrisburg - that are now seeing George Floyd protests. I am absolutely shocked that these small conservative towns are seeing George Floyd protests, and it's partly because the young people in these towns, whose views are certainly evolving, have had access, through social media, to not only this image, but to millions of other kids who are protesting across the globe about this murder of George Floyd. I mean, it's not restricted to the United States, as you know. This has traveled widely across the globe.

**Ralph Nader:** It's quite remarkable, and a majority of the protesters are White. Of course, the majority of people are White, but nobody could have categorized that as just a Black American protest. Even in Europe, the majority are White, which is hugely encouraging. But, here's something that's even more encouraging that the listeners and you, Michael Long, author of this book, *We the Resistance*, may not know. But a recent survey showed that one-fourth of hardcore conservatives have a positive view of the Black Lives Matter movement. One quarter of the hardcore conservatives - we're talking Trump voters here. Something is happening to quicken the sense of justice, and the sense of injustice, and the sense of fair play and equal treatment in America, agree?

**Michael G. Long:** I do agree. I think it's almost too early to analyze it with any accuracy, and I wish I knew the exact reasons for that. I don't, but I can celebrate that point. I'm shocked. Yeah, I'm shocked by that point. 20%, you say?

**Ralph Nader:** One quarter.

**Michael G. Long:** One quarter? 25%?

**Ralph Nader:** of the hardcore.

**Michael G. Long:** Yeah, to me, that's absolutely shocking. But, I'll tell you what, watching a police officer murder a Black man, who is crying out for mama, pulls at the hearts in ways that few things do. Is that part of it? That has to be part of it. Social media? That has to be part of it. Seeing all the kids energized by this, that has to be part of it.

**Ralph Nader:** I think part of it is --

**Michael G. Long:** The President's awful reactions have to be part of it as well, right?

**Ralph Nader:** I think part of it is the quarter of hardcore conservatives have children. It's not like what happened in the Vietnam War. You had real pro-Vietnam War older people, parents and grandparents, who started to change when they heard what the college students and others were doing all over the country--resisting the draft, protesting the Vietnam War, whose costs are still with us by the way. That's the major reason, Mr. Long, that we don't have full Medicare for All. Because when Lyndon Johnson was pushing Medicare and Medicaid through Congress, he wanted the whole thing to cover everywhere. And members of Congress said, with the Vietnam War deficit, we can't afford it. And every year, tens of thousands of Americans die because they cannot afford health insurance to get diagnoses and treatment in time. Add that up as the casualties of the Vietnam War, which was never declared by Congress, by the way. How did this book affect you? When you were working on this book, and you're a historian with many other books -- I mean, you wrote the book on Jackie Robinson's significance in the civil rights movement. You've written many books. Did this affect you any more in terms of wanting to make you more active, more functionally-indignant, more pessimistic, more optimistic? Give us your reaction.

**Michael G. Long:** Well, Ralph, you make so many points that it's difficult for me to keep track of them sometimes. [Michael and Ralph laugh] But, I want to go back to an earlier point we were talking about, and that is why these George Floyd protests have lasted so long, why they seem to be succeeding, and why they have such broad-based support. And I'm wondering, and I'd like your thoughts on this, whether you think the economy matters. Many people, as you know, are out of jobs, millions of people. Does the disaffection about that, about the economy affect the positive views of Black Lives Matter? Is there a correlation there that's worth exploring? There's more time, right, for people to pay attention to the protests?

**Ralph Nader:** Well, they feel aggrieved too. I mean, the whole system operates against them as excluded patients trying to pay for healthcare. That doesn't discriminate between conservative or liberal. People feel that corporate supremacists and their control over Washington and state legislatures are just destroying opportunities, destroying health and safety, destroying the repair of public services in their own

community. They see crumbled schools, they see contaminated drinking water, for lack of public investment. They see disabling type of public transit with buses that are decrepit and not frequent. Yeah, I think that's all a part of it. It's like a huge cry from many sources and many reasons, a huge cry of, "Enough already," don't you think?

**Michael G. Long:** Yeah, I think so. I think that's what I see in my own community. I think it's what I see in the small communities around me here in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and it's heartening to see. It's great to see people straightening their back, you know, straightening their backbone, and throwing their shoulders back, and throwing their chin back and yelling, "Enough is enough." That's incredibly heartening, and you know, I used to teach peace studies at Elizabethtown College. The college has seen fit to cut communities programs in light of student enrollment, and my program got cut from it as well. It's terribly disappointing along the way, but I'm heartened by my students who protest for the first time now, and they're sending me emails telling me, "This is the first time I've protested, and let me tell I had tools for analyzing it that I gained from your class, and I love protesting, and I'm going to keep doing it until we can make some serious changes." I think that's what heartens me more, seeing the --

**Ralph Nader:** Is there anything more gratifying for a teacher than that kind of feedback?

**Michael G. Long:** No.

**Ralph Nader:** I must say, you do quote Martin Luther King, [Jr.] on the first page of this book. We're talking with Michael G. Long, who is the editor of *We the Resistance*, a 600-page paperback of first-person accounts over 300 years, documenting the history of nonviolent protest in the United States. And what Martin Luther King Jr., said, "Somewhere I read that the greatness of America is the right to protest for right." So, how did it effect you? You had to read all of these and select them from even larger bodies of original primary source history.

**Michael G. Long:** You know, I grew up believing that power in the United States was concentrated in the [office of the] President, in the Supreme Court, and in the Congress. And as a good patriot, I believed that for a very long time. And what this book did was, not only reiterate, but just drove me deeper into the belief that real power, ultimate power resides at the bottom of that pyramid, you know, where if you look at a cheerleader pyramid, the traditional one, anyway, when people from the base start to pull out, the top collapses. I love that image, and that image came to me again and again as I was working through this book, and I just realized, in ways that I hadn't before, that power resides with those, the masses on the bottom, with those of us who don't believe that we have the voice that we really do have.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, your book proves the point because each one of these excerpts were protesting and were considered rebels, dissenters, traitors, and most of what they were protesting has become the commonplace of today. If it isn't part of our sociopolitical fabric, it's part of our sense of right and wrong.

**Michael G. Long:** Right, and sometimes you have to take a long-term view of this, right? So, it's really difficult for me, and for you, and others to see Trump's troops clearing out peaceful protests so he can do a photo op with a Bible in front of the church across from the White House. And it looks, in that moment, like those militarized forces are winning. It looks, in that moment, that they're really trampling the rights of peaceful protesters. And in that moment, they did, and in that moment, they did win. But, moments are moments, and when you look at the scope of history, nonviolent protests win out a lot more, and I think we're going to see this nonviolent protest win over the military in this case and certainly win over Trump as well.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, we're out of time. We've been talking with Michael G. Long, editor of this wonderful 600-page paperback of first-person accounts over 300 years called *We the Resistance: Documenting a History of Nonviolent Protest in the United States*. All of these people had a different voice; they often had different causes; they were persistent, and their blasphemy of yesteryear has become the commonplace of today. This is a book that pulsates, it excites, it motivates, it outrages, and you're losing something, listeners, if you don't pick it up. It's published by City Lights, the progressive publisher in San Francisco. And you know how to get it in today's internet world or any independent bookstore can get it for you now, regardless of whether they have it in stock or not. It's all available from wherever bookstores are located. Thank you very much, Michael.

**Michael G. Long:** It's great to be with you, and thanks for having this radio program as a form of nonviolent protest in U.S. history.

**Ralph Nader:** [laughter] Well said.

**Steve Skrovan:** We've been speaking with nonviolent protest expert, Professor Michael G. Long. We will link to his work at [ralphnaderradiohour.com](http://ralphnaderradiohour.com). Let's take a short break. When we return, we will talk about the planned Israeli annexation of the West Bank. But, first let's check in with our corporate crime reporter, Russell Mokhiber.

**Russell Mokhiber:** From the National Press Building in Washington, D.C., this is your Corporate Crime Reporter Morning Minute for Friday, June 26, 2020. I'm Russell Mokhiber. More than 130 former Manhattan federal prosecutors have signed an open letter condemning President Donald Trump's firing of U.S. Attorney, Geoffrey Berman, "We, all former U.S. Attorneys and Assistant U.S. Attorneys for the Southern District of New York, deplore the recent actions of President Trump and Attorney General Barr in summarily firing U.S. Attorney Geoffrey Berman without cause," the prosecutors wrote.

"The actions of the President and Attorney General are an attack on the concept that investigations should be conducted in a nonpartisan manner," they wrote. "They are politicizing an office that, for more than 200 years, has remained apolitical, and they are undermining confidence in our criminal justice system." For the Corporate Crime Reporter, I'm Russell Mokhiber.

**Steve Skrovan:** Thank you, Russell. Welcome back to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*. I'm Steve Skrovan along with David Feldman and Ralph Nader. If the Israeli annexation of the West Bank happens, it will deprive Palestinians of important agricultural land and water. It will kill the two-state solution and will probably be met with violence. Our next guest is here to tell us more. David?

**David Feldman:** Juan Cole is a public intellectual, prominent essayist, and professor of history at the University of Michigan. His work seeks to put the relationship between the West and the Muslim world into a historical context. He has written about the upheavals in the Arab world since 2011. Professor Cole has regular columns in the *Nation* and Truthdig. And he is the founder and editor-in-chief of the online newsletter, *Informed Comment*. His most recent book is *Muhammad: Prophet of Peace Amid the Clash of Empires*. Welcome to the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour*, Juan Cole.

**Juan Cole:** Thanks so much.

**Ralph Nader:** Welcome, Professor Cole. There's a huge trouble brewing in the Middle East, as if it needs more trouble, because on July 1st, months ago, Prime Minister Netanyahu promised his hardcore supporters that he would move to annex 30% of the remaining West Bank, which is populated by Palestinians, and he would do it by fiat. He is not asking the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset, for approval. He's pulling a Donald Trump, ignoring the Congress under U.S. law. Donald Trump is behind this. He thought it was good, politically, for him in some states in the coming election. This is an illegal act, clearly in violation of international law, and it's going to disrupt all kinds of present situations between Israel and Arab nations and Israel and other countries in the world. Can you briefly describe the nature of this annexation and what you predict is going to be the reaction and various tumults as a result?

**Juan Cole:** Sure, well roughly 5 million people in the West Bank in Gaza are Palestinians living under Israeli military occupation. These are not territories that Israel is recognized by the international community to have any right to. They were conquered in 1967 and occupied. In international law, occupation is envisaged as something short. You know, it's something that happens during a war. When you take some of the other country's territory briefly, you might have to administer it. There are rules for how to administer them, but this has gone on since 1967, so it's no longer, I would argue, a matter of an occupation of the sort that is legalized in international law.

And Palestinians living under Israeli military occupation or in Gaza under military blockade are denied basic human rights. They're essentially colonial subjects. So, when Israel took the West Bank in 1967, it did already annex some territory. So, it annexed some territory around Jerusalem. And then in addition to that, it started sending in Israeli settlers, squatters, really, on Palestinian-owned land. By now, there are several hundred thousand of them, and they've just taken farms, and houses, and stolen them from the inhabitants under one ruse or another. So, what's going to happen on July 1st, according to Prime Minister Netanyahu, is that he will annex the land on which those settlements, those Israeli squatter settlements stand. And I think he's going to include in the annexation, not only those squatter settlements that the Israeli government recognizes as legal--of course, none of them are legal. In inter-national law, you're not allowed to settle occupied territory with your citizens. But he also probably annexed land on which illegal Israeli settlements exist; that is to say settlements, even Israel admits, are illegal. And then in addition, he's going to annex much of Jordan Valley, the area of the West Bank that abuts Jordan. And so, what will be left for the Palestinians will be completely surrounded by Israel, and already divided up into what amounts to South Africa style apartheid Bantustans.

**Ralph Nader:** When you consider the original size of Palestine, the West Bank is about 20%, so the Palestinians have already conceded 80% of what they believe is Palestine to the Israeli State, and now they're going to lose another 30%, which includes agricultural lands, of the remaining 20%. And what do you think the reaction is going to be if that happens? Even the Trumpsters are cautioning Netanyahu, because they don't want a violent upheaval and all kinds of trouble in the months before the November election.

**Juan Cole:** Yes, obviously, for us historians, telling you about the past is easier than telling you about the future. But, here's what I expect. First of all, I don't think it's likely that there will be a big incident over it, internationally. The European Union is condemning it, and the Trump Administration is actually saying, "Knock yourselves out. Do what you want." It puts some Arab countries in a difficult position. It puts Jordan in a very difficult position because it has a peace treaty with Israel, which was made in 1993 as part of the outcome of the Oslo Accords. The Oslo Accords envisaged that the Israelis would just give all of the West Bank to the Palestinians, which is inhabited by Palestinians, and that hasn't happened. And moreover now, much of it has been taken, as you say. So, I think it's possible that Jordan will cancel its peace treaty with Israel, and that Israeli security cooperation with Jordan will suffer as a result. There are some Arab countries like the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia, Bahrain that have moved towards better relations with Israel as a result of their own conflict with Iran. They're still seeking a powerful ally in the region that's also anti-Iranian. And so behind the scenes, there has been a thick tangle of negotiations and contacts, some of them open. Netanyahu went to Oman recently. So, I think they'll have

to continue to do this in secret or to back off a little bit, if this goes through. Qatar in the Gulf had been sending money through Israeli banks, and with the compliance of the Israeli government to Gaza. The Israelis had seen this Qatari money coming into Gaza as a safety valve, because otherwise, Gaza is, as you know, a kind of open-air camp, is completely surrounded and blockaded; people are miserable. And so, the Qatari money coming in maybe prevented things from exploding. But, Qatar has indicated that it won't continue that arrangement if the annexation goes forward. So, it will be a bump in the road for Israeli relations with countries in the region. I think the big effect might be on the Palestine Authority itself. This is the body that was set up in the aftermath of the 1993 Oslo Accords, which doesn't amount to much. It's not really a government, but it has some government-like features and its leaders are threatening just to dissolve themselves and to let the Israelis take the full brunt of having to govern the West Bank militarily without any Palestinian police help and so forth.

**Ralph Nader:** That is what is producing dissent in Israel, because if the Palestinian [National] Authority, which means Palestinian police dealing with security in the West Bank in connecting with the Israeli police and getting funds from the U.S., in the pursuit of stability there, if they disband, then Israeli soldiers have to be the police of over 5 million people in the West Bank, and you know what kind of events that's going to provoke. So, there are Israelis and not just the left peaceniks who are saying, "We don't need this kind of headache." That may be the main restraint, but Netanyahu is very bull-headed and he wants to put facts on the ground on July 1st, and then say, "Okay, who is going to do anything about that?"

**Juan Cole:** Exactly. Netanyahu is just going to present the government with a fait accompli something that's already done, and the Parliament would have to actively undo it at that point. And annexation, you know, is controversial inside Israel, but I don't think that there's a really strong majority for preventing Netanyahu from doing this. He argues that it's a security measure, that the permanent Israeli military control of the Jordan Valley enhances Israeli security. Israelis were always afraid of a tank advance into Israeli territory from Jordan, which has happened in 1948, for instance. Israel, at some point, is only 10 miles wide, so they make an argument that they need the military control in the West Bank to prevent themselves from being split in case of an armed conflict. But, you know, in today's world, worrying about tank war seems a little silly. Israel has a peace treaty with Egypt, the only country in the region that really poses a military challenge to Israel, and probably it doesn't pose a very strong one. And there isn't any country that's likely to mount an attack war on Israel. But, these are the kinds of arguments that Netanyahu makes that gives pause to some Israelis. Then, the far right in Israel is afraid that they'll be saddled with the Palestinians. That is to say if the Palestinians have no border with Jordan, if they are increasingly, you know, are part of Israel, because Netanyahu is not giving citizenship to the 60,000 Palestinians who live

in Jordan Valley, but he is declaring the land on which they live to be Israel. At what point is that implausible and at what point do they actually get citizenship? And so the right is afraid that this is a step towards almost an inevitable one-state solution in which the Palestinians in the West Bank in Gaza ultimately just become Israelis, and they don't want that at all. They consider Israel to be an ethnic Jewish state. So, it's a very complicated issue, and there is opposition, as you say, on the right as well as the left.

**Ralph Nader:** Well, you know, Donald Trump has gone out of his way to antagonize and inflict his bigotry on Arabs. There are people who have said he is a main proponent of the other anti-Semitism against the Arab people. And he gleefully talked about his cutting half of a billion dollars of desperate aid to Palestinian refugee camps, which has been supported by past Republican and Democratic Presidents who recognize, impliedly, that we had some role in the plight of the Palestinians. And he bragged about it at a political rally in Minnesota a few months ago. What's the situation? Who is making up that half a billion dollars that goes to medical aid, food aid, and other assistance to these desperate people of families and their children?

**Juan Cole:** Well, Ralph, I fear it just won't be made up very much. You know, some of the slack may be taken up by some of the Gulf countries. Again, Qatar might play a role. Japan wants the relations with the Arab world for its own reasons, and was talking about putting in more money. But, I think, on the whole, by and large, the Trump cuts to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency [UNRWA], which is the agency that, as you say, provides to the Palestinian refugees in camps throughout the region, education and job training, will simply be a shadow of its former self, and Palestinians in those camps will suffer a sharp decline in quality of life.

**Ralph Nader:** What do you have to say in concluding? We've been talking with Professor Juan Cole at the University of Michigan. What do you suggest to our listeners? Our listeners have a lot of injustice issues on their mind, but there are always some who have been focused on the situation of the U.S. role in the Middle East, the Iraq War, what's going on all over in the Gulf, Palestine, Israel. What would you recommend them doing vis-à-vis their members of Congress in the coming days here before the annexation becomes a certainty? It's not certain that he's going to act on July 1st. He could put some things in motion, so there would be more time for protests vis-à-vis the Congress.

**Juan Cole:** Yes. Well, obviously they should call to their congressional members and express their opposition to this step and their alarm about what it means. It is, to the extent that the Trump administration is obviously backing it, going to cause diplomatic problems for the United States. And you know there will be implications for that, and it's not impossible that violence will come out of it, including terrorism. So, you know, it's injustice, as a policy [that] produces pushback. The United States is very unlikely to



be completely unaffected by all this, so they should make that argument to their House Congressional Representative and [two] Senators.

**Ralph Nader:** And listeners should know, for once, the Democratic Party is opposed to this annexation. Joe Biden is opposed to this annexation. So work on the Democrats in Congress and whatever happens, make it one of the political issues going toward the November election. I mean, our country is waist-deep in the Middle East and horrible things can happen that affect the military budget, affect our status in the world, and affect domestic politics, as we know from history. Thank you very much, Professor Cole, and how can people get to read more of your writings on the Middle East?

**Juan Cole:** Well, I have a blog at J-U-A-N-C-O-L-E dot com, [juancole.com](http://juancole.com). It's called *Informed Comment*. I have lots of books and articles, but maybe the blog is the best way in.

**Ralph Nader:** Thank you again, and this is an issue which will not go away. We're glad to have you monitor it and inform the American people about it, as you have for many years, Juan Cole.

**Juan Cole:** It's an honor to be on with you, Ralph. Thank you.

**Ralph Nader:** Thank you, Juan.

**Steve Skrovan:** We have been speaking with Professor of Middle East history expert, Juan Cole. We will link to his work at [ralphnaderradiohour.com](http://ralphnaderradiohour.com). So, let's do some listener questions, and Ralph, we've got some response from last week's episode where you used the term "Moscow Mitch" when talking to Lisa Gilbert, and a few of our listeners took objection to that. Afdal Shahanshah, who is a loyal listener and critic, says, "Ralph is really lucky he didn't make those disgusting McCarthyite Moscow Mitch quips in Glenn Ford's presence. There's no way Glenn Ford would have tolerated it. He would have served up what, at this point, is some sorely needed schooling to Ralph." You need some sorely needed schooling, Ralph, on the reality and consequences of evidence-free McCarthyite jingoism.

Larry Fink then wrote, "Dear Ralph, I was sad and dismayed to hear you repeat a cheap Democratic talking point by referring to McConnell as Moscow Mitch, and then Donata Waltz responded to that by saying, "I agree. I was surprised at the smear." Ralph has traditionally been better than that. But then again, all these politicians are starting to earn every derogatory name pinned on them, and let them see how it feels. Maybe Nader's just tired. Aren't we all? So much BS. So much hypocrisy everywhere." So, how would you respond to that, Ralph?

**Ralph Nader:** Looks like it stirred up a hornet's nest in this internal battle between the left over the Democrat's focus on Putin and interference in the election. Let me start

with a little background. Mitch McConnell is the most successfully evil man in the Congress, probably in the last 100 years. He is recasting huge portions of the judiciary for decades, corporate-dominated, often bigoted judges; he has blocked all kinds of health and safety proposals that the House has passed. So, that's just by way of background about what Mitch McConnell is all about. The second is we have interfered in elections as a government all over the world. We've toppled about 60 regimes since World War II, so why are people surprised when other countries try to interfere in our election? It's quite clear that the Russians, among other countries, mess around, especially in an internet age, with our elections, with our voting process. Whether it has any effect, probably hasn't been determined, but people, like the questioners, think that the Democrats, to distract attention from their own crimes and Wall Street subservience, etcetera, etcetera, focus on this to distract the public and focus on the connection between Putin and Trump. And they're right on that, but the phrase "Moscow Mitch" has a different meaning on Capitol Hill than what the questioners are referring to. Moscow Mitch means that Mitch McConnell was obstructing election reforms that were proposed by the Democrats and partially passed by the House of Representatives to deal with the hacking into proprietary software, the mischief of corporate proprietary software with voting machines, the miscounting, the voter suppression, the purging-- you know the whole ball game. And McConnell is the main obstructer of that because he thinks it will reduce the chances of the Republicans stealing the election. That's why we call him Moscow Mitch because one of the interferences is coming from Russia as well as other places foreign and other places domestic. So, lighten up. If he hates that nickname and he deserves it empirically in the context of the U.S. Congress and reform legislation, use it.

**David Feldman:** Yeah, we know that it hurts his feelings, right? That nickname specifically.

**Ralph Nader:** Yeah, too bad. How many people he has produced health and safety damage and crushed their economic opportunities and supported the prison industrial complex and on and on? I don't understand where these questions are coming from. They're part of a ferocious internal blog battle among a segment of the left, and they have called the whole Putin interference and the relationship with Trump a distraction, but they've distracted themselves by spending so much time on it.

**Steve Skrovan:** Well, Afdal, now you've been schooled. But, don't stop writing. I know you won't. Well, thank you for your questions. I want to thank our guests again, Michael G. Long and Juan Cole. For those of you listening on the radio, that's our show. For you podcast listeners, stay tuned for some bonus material we call "The Wrap Up". A transcript of this show will appear on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* website soon after the episode is posted.

**David Feldman:** Subscribe to us on our *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* YouTube channel, and for Ralph's weekly column - it's free - go to [nader.org](http://nader.org). For more from Russell Mokhiber, go to [corporatecrimereporter.com](http://corporatecrimereporter.com)

**Steve Skrovan:** The producers of the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* are Jimmy Lee Wirt and Matthew Marran. Our executive producer is Alan Minsky.

**David Feldman:** Our theme music, "Stand Up, Rise Up" was written and performed by Kemp Harris. Our proofreader is Elisabeth Solomon; our intern is Michaela Squier. Join us next week on the *Ralph Nader Radio Hour* when we welcome Daniel Newman, author of the nonfiction graphic novel, *Unrig: How to Fix Our Broken Democracy*. Thank you, Ralph.

**Ralph Nader:** Thank you, everybody, and I'm still looking for the first Congress watchdog group to start up using the fable that I wrote, which gives them the roadmap, *How the Rats Re-Formed Congress*. Go to [ratsreformcongress.org](http://ratsreformcongress.org) to see what I mean.

♪ Say you're just one person and who will hear your voice? ♪

♪ Don't let them fool you. You have the power in your hand. ♪

♪ I'm only trying to school you. Listen to me, people. Do you understand? ♪

♪ We gotta (stand up). Oh, you've been sitting way too long (oh stand up) ♪

♪ You know what's right and you know what's wrong (rise up) ♪

♪ Don't let the system pull you down (stand up, stand up, you've been sitting way too long) ♪